

Assembly Bill No. 1559

CHAPTER 927

An act to amend Sections 214 and 254.5 of, and to add Section 214.15 to, the Revenue and Taxation Code, relating to taxation, to take effect immediately, tax levy.

[Approved by Governor October 10, 1999. Filed
with Secretary of State October 10, 1999.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 1559, Wiggins. Property tax welfare exemption: low- and moderate-income housing.

Existing property tax law establishes a welfare exemption under which property is exempt from taxation if, among other things, that property is used exclusively for religious, hospital, scientific, or charitable purposes and is owned and operated by an entity, as provided, that is itself organized and operated for those purposes. Existing law also establishes a partial welfare exemption for property used exclusively for rental housing and related facilities and owned and operated by a nonprofit entity or veterans' organization that meets exemption requirements. This partial exemption corresponds to the proportion of the property that serves lower income households and applies in certain instances, including the instance in which a minimum of 20% of households are lower income households with rent not in excess of a statutorily prescribed level. This partial exemption requires, among other things, the certification by the owner that the property is subject to a deed restriction, agreement, or other legal document that restricts the property's usage, as provided.

This bill would eliminate the application of the exemption in the instance in which the 20% lower income standard is met and would revise the certification requirement to instead require a property owner to certify the existence of an enforceable and verifiable agreement with a public agency or a recorded deed restriction with respect to the property's usage.

This bill would also clarify that the welfare exemption applies to property that is owned and operated by a nonprofit corporation, otherwise qualifying for the welfare exemption, that is organized and operated for the purpose of building and rehabilitating single-family or multifamily residences for sale, as provided, at cost to low-income families. This bill would, in the case of property not previously designated as open space, also specify that the welfare exemption as so applied may not be denied on the basis that the subject property does not currently include a residence or a residence under

construction. This bill would, with respect to exempt property as so described, also apply provisions that, subject to certain conditions, exclude a welfare exemption claimant from annual exemption reapplication requirements.

This bill would make legislative findings and declarations that certain of the changes made by this bill do not constitute a change in, but are declaratory of, existing law.

Section 2229 of the Revenue and Taxation Code requires the Legislature to reimburse local agencies annually for certain property tax revenues lost as a result of any exemption or classification of property for purposes of ad valorem property taxation.

This bill would provide that, notwithstanding Section 2229 of the Revenue and Taxation Code, no appropriation is made and the state shall not reimburse local agencies for property tax revenues lost by them pursuant to the bill.

This bill would result in a change in state taxes for the purpose of increasing state revenues within the meaning of Section 3 of Article XIII-A of the California Constitution, and thus would require for passage the approval of $\frac{2}{3}$ of the membership of each house of the Legislature.

This bill would take effect immediately as a tax levy, but its provisions would apply commencing on the January 1, 2000, property tax lien date.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 214 of the Revenue and Taxation Code is amended to read:

214. (a) Property used exclusively for religious, hospital, scientific, or charitable purposes owned and operated by community chests, funds, foundations or corporations organized and operated for religious, hospital, scientific, or charitable purposes is exempt from taxation, including ad valorem taxes to pay the interest and redemption charges on any indebtedness approved by the voters prior to July 1, 1978, or any bonded indebtedness for the acquisition or improvement of real property approved on or after July 1, 1978, by two-thirds of the votes cast by the voters voting on the proposition, if:

(1) The owner is not organized or operated for profit. However, in the case of hospitals, the organization shall not be deemed to be organized or operated for profit if, during the immediately preceding fiscal year, operating revenues, exclusive of gifts, endowments and grants-in-aid, did not exceed operating expenses by an amount equivalent to 10 percent of those operating expenses. As used herein, operating expenses include depreciation based on cost of replacement and amortization of, and interest on, indebtedness.

(2) No part of the net earnings of the owner inures to the benefit of any private shareholder or individual.

(3) The property is used for the actual operation of the exempt activity, and does not exceed an amount of property reasonably necessary to the accomplishment of the exempt purpose.

(A) For the purposes of determining whether the property is used for the actual operation of the exempt activity, consideration shall not be given to use of the property for either or both of the following described activities if that use is occasional:

(i) The owner conducts fundraising activities on the property and the proceeds derived from those activities are not unrelated business taxable income, as defined in Section 512 of the Internal Revenue Code, of the owner and are used to further the exempt activity of the owner.

(ii) The owner permits any other organization that meets all of the requirements of this subdivision, other than ownership of the property, to conduct fundraising activities on the property and the proceeds derived from those activities are not unrelated business taxable income, as defined in Section 512 of the Internal Revenue Code, of the organization, are not subject to the tax on unrelated business taxable income that is imposed by Section 511 of the Internal Revenue Code, and are used to further the exempt activity of the organization.

(B) For purposes of subparagraph (A):

(i) “Occasional use” means use of the property on an irregular or intermittent basis by the qualifying owner or any other qualifying organization described in clause (ii) of subparagraph (A) that is incidental to the primary activities of the owner or the other organization.

(ii) “Fundraising activities” means both activities involving the direct solicitation of money or other property and the anticipated exchange of goods or services for money between the soliciting organization and the organization or person solicited.

(C) Subparagraph (A) shall have no application in determining whether paragraph (3) has been satisfied unless the owner of the property and any other organization using the property as provided in subparagraph (A) have filed with the assessor duplicate copies of valid unrevoked letters or rulings from the Internal Revenue Service that state that the owner and the other organization qualify as exempt organizations under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. The owner of the property and any other organization using the property as provided in subparagraph (A) also shall file duplicate copies of their most recently filed federal income tax returns.

(D) For the purposes of determining whether the property is used for the actual operation of the exempt activity, consideration shall not be given to the use of the property for meetings conducted by any



other organization if the meetings are incidental to the other organization's primary activities, are not fundraising meetings or activities as defined in subparagraph (B), are held no more than once per week, and the other organization and its use of the property meet all other requirements of paragraphs (1) to (5), inclusive, of subdivision (a). The owner or the other organization also shall file with the assessor duplicate copies of valid, unrevoked letters or rulings from the Internal Revenue Service or the Franchise Tax Board stating that the other organization, or the national organization of which it is a local chapter or affiliate, qualifies as an exempt organization under Section 501(c)(3) or Section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code or Section 23701d, 23701f, or 23701w, together with duplicate copies of that organization's most recently filed federal income tax return, if the organization is required by federal law to file a return.

Nothing in subparagraph (A), (B), (C), or (D) shall be construed to either enlarge or restrict the exemption provided for in subdivision (b) of Section 4 and Section 5 of Article XIII of the California Constitution and this section.

(4) The property is not used or operated by the owner or by any other person so as to benefit any officer, trustee, director, shareholder, member, employee, contributor, or bondholder of the owner or operator, or any other person, through the distribution of profits, payment of excessive charges or compensations, or the more advantageous pursuit of their business or profession.

(5) The property is not used by the owner or members thereof for fraternal or lodge purposes, or for social club purposes except where that use is clearly incidental to a primary religious, hospital, scientific, or charitable purpose.

(6) The property is irrevocably dedicated to religious, charitable, scientific, or hospital purposes and upon the liquidation, dissolution or abandonment of the owner will not inure to the benefit of any private person except a fund, foundation, or corporation organized and operated for religious, hospital, scientific, or charitable purposes.

(7) The property, if used exclusively for scientific purposes, is used by a foundation or institution that, in addition to complying with the foregoing requirements for the exemption of charitable organizations in general, has been chartered by the Congress of the United States (except that this requirement shall not apply when the scientific purposes are medical research), and whose objects are the encouragement or conduct of scientific investigation, research, and discovery for the benefit of the community at large.

The exemption provided for herein shall be known as the "welfare exemption." This exemption shall be in addition to any other exemption now provided by law, and the existence of the exemption provision in paragraph (2) of subdivision (a) of Section 202 shall not preclude the exemption under this section for museum or library



property. Except as provided in subdivision (e), this section shall not be construed to enlarge the college exemption.

(b) Property used exclusively for school purposes of less than collegiate grade and owned and operated by religious, hospital, or charitable funds, foundations, or corporations, which property and funds, foundations, or corporations meet all of the requirements of subdivision (a), shall be deemed to be within the exemption provided for in subdivision (b) of Section 4 and Section 5 of Article XIII of the California Constitution and this section.

(c) Property used exclusively for nursery school purposes and owned and operated by religious, hospital, or charitable funds, foundations, or corporations, which property and funds, foundations, or corporations meet all the requirements of subdivision (a), shall be deemed to be within the exemption provided for in subdivision (b) of Section 4 and Section 5 of Article XIII of the California Constitution and this section.

(d) Property used exclusively for a noncommercial educational FM broadcast station or an educational television station, and owned and operated by religious, hospital, scientific, or charitable funds, foundations, or corporations meeting all of the requirements of subdivision (a), shall be deemed to be within the exemption provided for in subdivision (b) of Section 4 and Section 5 of Article XIII of the California Constitution and this section.

(e) Property used exclusively for religious, charitable, scientific, or hospital purposes and owned and operated by religious, hospital, scientific, or charitable funds, foundations, or corporations or educational institutions of collegiate grade, as defined in Section 203, which property and funds, foundations, corporations, or educational institutions meet all of the requirements of subdivision (a), shall be deemed to be within the exemption provided for in subdivision (b) of Section 4 and Section 5 of Article XIII of the California Constitution and this section. As to educational institutions of collegiate grade, as defined in Section 203, the requirements of paragraph (6) of subdivision (a) shall be deemed to be met if both of the following are met:

(1) The property of the educational institution is irrevocably dedicated in its articles of incorporation to charitable and educational purposes, to religious and educational purposes, or to educational purposes.

(2) The articles of incorporation of the educational institution provide for distribution of its property upon its liquidation, dissolution, or abandonment to a fund, foundation, or corporation organized and operated for religious, hospital, scientific, charitable, or educational purposes meeting the requirements for exemption provided by Section 203 or this section.

(f) Property used exclusively for housing and related facilities for elderly or handicapped families and financed by, including, but not



limited to, the federal government pursuant to Section 202 of Public Law 86-372 (12 U.S.C. Sec. 1701q), as amended, Section 231 of Public Law 73-479 (12 U.S.C. Sec. 1715v), Section 236 of Public Law 90-448 (12 U.S.C. Sec. 1715z), or Section 811 of Public Law 101-625 (42 U.S.C. Sec. 8013), and owned and operated by religious, hospital, scientific, or charitable funds, foundations, or corporations meeting all of the requirements of this section shall be deemed to be within the exemption provided for in subdivision (b) of Section 4 and Section 5 of Article XIII of the California Constitution and this section.

The amendment of this paragraph made by Chapter 1102 of the Statutes of 1984 does not constitute a change in, but is declaratory of, the existing law. However, no refund of property taxes shall be required as a result of this amendment for any fiscal year prior to the fiscal year in which the amendment takes effect.

Property used exclusively for housing and related facilities for elderly or handicapped families at which supplemental care or services designed to meet the special needs of elderly or handicapped residents are not provided, or that is not financed by the federal government pursuant to Section 202 of Public Law 86-372 (12 U.S.C. Sec. 1701q), as amended, Section 231 of Public Law 73-479 (12 U.S.C. Sec. 1715v), Section 236 of Public Law 90-448 (12 U.S.C. Sec. 1715z), or Section 811 of Public Law 101-625 (42 U.S.C. Sec. 8013), shall not be entitled to exemption pursuant to this subdivision unless the property is used for housing and related facilities for low- and moderate-income elderly or handicapped families. Property that would otherwise be exempt pursuant to this subdivision, except that it includes some housing and related facilities for other than low- or moderate-income elderly or handicapped families, shall be entitled to a partial exemption. The partial exemption shall be equal to that percentage of the value of the property that is equal to the percentage that the number of low- and moderate-income elderly and handicapped families occupying the property represents of the total number of families occupying the property.

As used in this subdivision, “low and moderate income” has the same meaning as the term “persons and families of low or moderate income” as defined by Section 50093 of the Health and Safety Code.

(g) (1) Property used exclusively for rental housing and related facilities and owned and operated by religious, hospital, scientific, or charitable funds, foundations, or corporations, including limited partnerships in which the managing general partner is an eligible nonprofit corporation, meeting all of the requirements of this section, or by veterans’ organizations, as described in Section 215.1, meeting all the requirements of paragraphs (1) to (7), inclusive, of subdivision (a), shall be deemed to be within the exemption provided for in subdivision (b) of Section 4 and Section 5 of Article XIII of the California Constitution and this section and shall be entitled to a partial exemption equal to that percentage of the value of the

property that the portion of the property serving lower income households represents of the total property in any year in which either of the following criteria applies:

(A) The acquisition, rehabilitation, development, or operation of the property, or any combination of these factors, is financed with tax-exempt mortgage revenue bonds or general obligation bonds, or is financed by local, state, or federal loans or grants and the rents of the occupants who are lower income households do not exceed those prescribed by deed restrictions or regulatory agreements pursuant to the terms of the financing or financial assistance.

(B) The owner of the property is eligible for and receives low-income housing tax credits pursuant to Section 42 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as added by Public Law 99-514.

(2) In order to be eligible for the exemption provided by this subdivision, the owner of the property shall do both of the following:

(A) Certify and ensure that there is an enforceable and verifiable agreement with a public agency or, a recorded deed restriction, that restricts the project's usage and that provides that the units designated for use by lower income households are continuously available to or occupied by lower income households at rents that do not exceed those prescribed by Section 50053 of the Health and Safety Code, or, to the extent that the terms of federal, state, or local financing or financial assistance conflicts with Section 50053, rents that do not exceed those prescribed by the terms of the financing or financial assistance.

(B) Certify that the funds that would have been necessary to pay property taxes are used to maintain the affordability of, or reduce rents otherwise necessary for, the units occupied by lower income households.

(3) As used in this subdivision, "lower income households" has the same meaning as the term "lower income households" as defined by Section 50079.5 of the Health and Safety Code.

(h) Property used exclusively for an emergency or temporary shelter and related facilities for homeless persons and families and owned and operated by religious, hospital, scientific, or charitable funds, foundations, or corporations meeting all of the requirements of this section shall be deemed to be within the exemption provided for in subdivision (b) of Section 4 and Section 5 of Article XIII of the California Constitution and this section. Property that otherwise would be exempt pursuant to this subdivision, except that it includes housing and related facilities for other than an emergency or temporary shelter, shall be entitled to a partial exemption.

As used in this subdivision, "emergency or temporary shelter" means a facility that would be eligible for funding pursuant to Chapter 11 (commencing with Section 50800) of Part 2 of Division 31 of the Health and Safety Code.

(i) Property used exclusively for housing and related facilities for employees of religious, charitable, scientific, or hospital organizations that meet all the requirements of subdivision (a) and owned and operated by funds, foundations, or corporations that meet all the requirements of subdivision (a) shall be deemed to be within the exemption provided for in subdivision (b) of Sections 4 and 5 of Article XIII of the California Constitution and this section to the extent the residential use of the property is institutionally necessary for the operation of the organization.

(j) For purposes of this section, charitable purposes include educational purposes. For purposes of this subdivision, “educational purposes” means those educational purposes and activities for the benefit of the community as a whole or an unascertainable and indefinite portion thereof, and shall not include those educational purposes and activities that are primarily for the benefit of an organization’s shareholders. Educational activities include the study of relevant information, the dissemination of that information to interested members of the general public, and the participation of interested members of the general public.

SEC. 2. Section 214.15 is added to the Revenue and Taxation Code, to read:

214.15. (a) Property is within the exemption provided by Sections 4 and 5 of Article XIII of the California Constitution if that property is owned and operated by a nonprofit corporation, otherwise qualifying for exemption under Section 214, that is organized and operated for the specific and primary purpose of building and rehabilitating single or multifamily residences for sale at cost to low-income families, with financing in the form of a zero interest rate loan and without regard to religion, race, national origin, or the sex of the head of household.

(b) (1) In the case of property not previously designated as open space, the exemption specified by subdivision (a) may not be denied to a property on the basis that the property does not currently include a single or multifamily residence as described in that subdivision, or a single or multifamily residence as so described that is in the course of construction.

(2) With regard to paragraph (1), the Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

(A) The exempt activities of a nonprofit corporation as described in subdivision (a) qualitatively differ from the exempt activities of other nonprofit entities that provide housing in that the exempt purpose of a nonprofit corporation as described in subdivision (a) is not to own and operate a housing project on an ongoing basis, but is instead to make housing, and the land reasonably necessary for the use of that housing, available for prompt sale to low-income residents.

(B) In light of this distinction, the holding of real property by a nonprofit corporation as described in subdivision (a), for the future

construction on that property of a single or multifamily residence as described in that same subdivision, is central to that corporation's exempt purposes and activities.

(C) In light of the factors set forth in subparagraphs (A) and (B), the holding of real property by a nonprofit corporation described in subdivision (a), for the future construction on that property of a single or multifamily residence as described in that same subdivision, constitutes the exclusive use of that property for a charitable purpose within the meaning of subdivision (b) of Section 4 of Article XIII of the California Constitution.

SEC. 3. Section 254.5 of the Revenue and Taxation Code is amended to read:

254.5. (a) Affidavits for the welfare exemption and the veterans' organization exemption shall be filed in duplicate on or before February 15 of each year with the assessor. Affidavits of organizations filing for the first time shall be accompanied by duplicate certified copies of the financial statements of the owner and operator. Thereafter, financial statements shall be submitted only if requested in writing by either the assessor or the board. Copies of the affidavits and financial statements shall be forwarded not later than April 1 by the assessor with his or her recommendations for approval or denial to the board which shall review all the affidavits and statements and may institute an independent audit or verification of the operations of the owner and operator to ascertain whether both the owner and operator meet the requirements of Section 214 of the Revenue and Taxation Code. In this connection the board shall consider, among other matters, whether:

(1) The services and expenses of the owner or operator (including salaries) are excessive, based upon like services and salaries in comparable public institutions.

(2) The operations of the owner or operator, either directly or indirectly, materially enhance the private gain of any individual or individuals.

(3) Any capital investment of the owner or operator for expansion of physical plant is justified by the contemplated return thereon, and required to serve the interests of the community.

(4) The property on which exemption is claimed is used for the actual operation of an exempt activity and does not exceed an amount of property reasonably necessary to the accomplishment of the exempt purpose.

(b) The board shall make a finding as to the eligibility of each applicant and the applicant's property and shall forward its finding to the assessor concerned. In a case where the board conducts a hearing with respect to the eligibility of the applicant and the applicant's property, the finding shall be forwarded to the assessor concerned within 30 days after the decision is made by the board following the hearing. The assessor may deny the claim of an

applicant the board finds eligible but may not grant the claim of an applicant the board finds ineligible.

(c) Notwithstanding subdivision (a), an applicant, granted a welfare exemption and owning any property exempted pursuant to Section 214.15 or Section 231, shall not be required to reapply for the welfare exemption in any subsequent year in which there has been no transfer of, or other change in title to, the exempted property and the property is used exclusively by a governmental entity or by a nonprofit corporation described in Section 214.15 for its interest and benefit. The applicant shall notify the assessor on or before March 15 if, on or before the preceding lien date, the applicant became ineligible for the welfare exemption or if, on or before that lien date, the property was no longer owned by the applicant or otherwise failed to meet all requirements for the welfare exemption.

Prior to the lien date, the assessor shall annually mail a notice to every applicant relieved of the requirement of filing an annual application by this subdivision.

The notice shall be in a form and contain that information that the board may prescribe, and shall set forth the circumstances under which the property may no longer be eligible for exemption and advise the applicant of the duty to inform the assessor if the property is no longer eligible for exemption.

The notice shall include a card that is to be returned to the assessor by any applicant desiring to maintain eligibility for the welfare exemption under Section 214.15 or Section 231. The card shall be in the following form:

To all persons who have received a welfare exemption under Section 214.15 or Section 231 of the Revenue and Taxation Code for the _____ fiscal year.

Question: Will the property to which the exemption applies in the _____ fiscal year continue to be used exclusively by government or by an organization as described in Section 214.15 for its interest and benefit in the _____ fiscal year?

YES _____ NO _____

Signature: _____

Title: _____

Failure to return this card does not of itself constitute a waiver of exemption as called for by the California Constitution, but may result in onsite inspection to verify exempt activity.

(d) Upon any indication that a welfare exemption has been incorrectly granted, the assessor shall redetermine eligibility for the exemption. If the assessor determines that the property, or any



portion thereof, is no longer eligible for the exemption, he or she shall immediately cancel the exemption on so much of the property as is no longer eligible for the exemption.

(e) If a welfare exemption has been incorrectly allowed, an escape assessment as provided by Article 4 (commencing with Section 531) of Chapter 3 in the amount of the exemption, with interest as provided in Section 506, shall be made, and a penalty shall be assessed for any failure to notify the assessor as required by this section in an amount equaling 10 percent of the escape assessment, but in no event exceeding two hundred fifty dollars (\$250).

SEC. 4. The addition of subdivision (a) of Section 214.15 of the Revenue and Taxation Code by this act does not constitute a change in, but is declaratory of, existing law.

SEC. 5. Notwithstanding Section 2229 of the Revenue and Taxation Code, no appropriation is made by this act and the state shall not reimburse any local agency for any property tax revenues lost by it pursuant to this act.

SEC. 6. This act provides for a tax levy within the meaning of Article IV of the Constitution and shall go into immediate effect. However, the provisions of this act shall apply on and after the property tax lien date on January 1, 2000.

